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THE

CHARACTER AND INFLUENCE

OF

ABOLITIONISM:

A

...mon preached in the First Presbyterian Church of Brooklyn, N. Y.,

ON

SUNDAY EVENING, DECEMBER 9, 1860,

BY

Reverend **HENRY J. VAN DYKE.**

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SERMON.

1. Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.

2. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful, and beloved partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort.

3. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness,

4. He is proud, knowing nothing but doting about questions and strifes of words whereo cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings,

5. Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness; from such withdraw thyself.

[*Paul's First Epistle to Timothy—6th chap., 1st to 5th verse.*

I propose to discuss the character and influence of abolitionism. With this view, I have selected a text from the Bible, and purpose to adhere to the letter and spirit of its teaching. We ackowledge in this place but one standard of morals, but one authoritative and infallable rule of faith and practice. For we are Christians here: not Papists to bow down to the dictation of any man or church; not heathen philosophers, to grope our way by the feeble glimmerings of the light of nature; not modern infidels, to appeal from the written law of God to the corrupt and fickle tribunal of reason and humanity; but Christians, on whose banner is inscribed this sublime challenge: "To the law and to the testimony — if they speak not according to this word it is because there is no light in them."

Let me direct your special attention to the language of our text. There is no dispute among commentators — there is no room for dispute — as to the meaning of the expression "servants under the yoke." Even Mr. Barnes, who is himself a distinguished abolitionist, and has done more, perhaps, than any other man in this country to propagate abolition doctrines, admits that "the addition of the phrase 'under the yoke'" shows undoubtedly that it (*i. e.* the original word *doulos*) is to be understood here of slavery. Let me quote another testimony on this point from an eminent Scotch divine — I mean Dr. McKnight — whose exposition of the epistle is a standard work in Great Britain and in this country, and whose associations must exempt him from all

suspicion of pro-slavery prejudices. He introduces his exposition of this chapter with the following explanation: "Because the law of Moses allowed no Israelite to be made a slave for life without his own consent, the Judaizing teachers, to allure slaves to their party, taught that under the gospel likewise involuntary slavery is unlawful. This doctrine the apostle condemned here, as in his other epistles, by enjoining Christian slaves to honor and obey their masters, whether they were believers or unbelievers, and by assuring Timothy, that if any person taught otherwise he opposed the wholesome precepts of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the gospel, which in all points is conformable to godliness or sound morality, and was puffed up with pride, without possessing any true knowledge either of the Jewish or Christian revelation." Our learned Scotch friend then goes on to expound the passage in the following paraphrase, which we commend to the prayerful attention of all whom it may concern:

"Let whatever Christian slaves are under the yoke of unbelievers pay their own masters all respect and obedience, that the character of God whom we worship may not be calumniated, and the doctrine of the gospel may not be evil spoken of as tending to destroy the political rights of mankind. And those Christian slaves who have believing masters, let them not despise them, fancying that they are their equals because they are their brethren in Christ; for, though all Christians are equal as to religious privileges, slaves are inferior to their masters in station. Wherefore, let them serve their masters more diligently, because they who enjoy the benefit of their service are believers and beloved of God. 'These things teach, and exhort the brethren to practice them.' If any one teach differently by affirming that under the gospel slaves are not bound to serve their masters, but ought to be made free, and does not consent to the wholesome commandments which are our Lord Jesus Christ's, and to the doctrine of the gospel which in all points is conformable to true morality, he is puffed up with pride, and knoweth nothing either of the Jewish or the Christian revelations, though he pretends to have great knowledge of both; but is distempered in his mind about idle questions and debate of words, which afford no foundation for such a doctrine, but are the source of envy, contention, evil speaking, unjust suspicion that the truth is not sincerely maintained, keen disputings carried on contrary to conscience by men wholly corrupted in their minds and destitute of the true doctrine of the gospel, who reckon whatever produces most money is the best religion; from all such impious teachers withdraw thyself, and do not dispute with them."

The text, as thus expounded by an American abolitionist and a Scotch divine, (whose testimony need not be confirmed by quotations from all the other commentators,) is a prophecy written for these days and wonderfully applicable to our present circumstances. It gives us a life-like picture of abolitionism in its principles, its spirit and its practice, and furnishes us with plain instruction in regard to our duty in the premises. Before entering upon the discussion of the doctrine, let us define the terms employed. By abolitionism we mean the principles and measures of abolitionists. And what is an abolitionist? He is one who believes that slaveholding is sin, and ought therefore be abolished. This is the fundamental, the characteristic, the essential principle of abolitionism: that slaveholding is sin; that holding men in involuntary servitude is an infringement upon the rights of man, a heinous crime in the sight of God. A man may believe, on political or commercial grounds, that slavery is an undesirable system, and that slave labor is not the most profitable; he may have various views as to the rights of slaveholders under the Constitution of the country; he may think this or that law upon the statute books of Southern States is wrong; but this does not constitute him an abolitionist, unless he believes slaveholding is morally wrong. The alleged sinfulness of slaveholding, as it is the characteristic doctrine, so it is the strength of abolitionism in all its ramified and various forms. It is by this doctrine that it lays hold upon the hearts and consciences of men, that it comes as a disturbing force into our ecclesiastical and civil institutions, and by exciting religious animosity (which all history proves to be the strongest of human passions) imparts a peculiar intensity to every contest into which it enters. And you will perceive it is just here that abolitionism presents a proper subject for discussion in the pulpit—for it is one great purpose of the Bible, and therefore one great duty of God's ministers in its exposition, to show what is sin and what is not. Those who hold the doctrine that slaveholding is sin, and ought therefore to be abolished, differ very much in the extent to which they reduce their theory to practice. In some, this faith is almost without works. They content themselves with only voting in such a way as in their judgment will best promote the ultimate triumph of their views. Others stand off at what they suppose a safe distance, as Shimei did when he stood on an opposite hill to curse King David and rebuke the sin and denounce divine judgments upon the sinner. Others, more practical, if not more prudent, go into the very midst of the alleged wickedness, and teach "servants under the yoke" that they ought not to count their own masters worthy of all honor; that liberty is their

inalienable right, which they should maintain, if necessary, even by the shedding of blood. Now, it is not for me to decide who of all these are the truest to their own principles. It is not for me to decide whether the man who preaches this doctrine in brave words, amid applauding multitudes in the city of Brooklyn, or the one who, in the stillness of night, and in the face of the law's terrors, goes to practice the preaching at Harper's Ferry, is the most consistent abolitionist and the most heroic man. It is not for me to decide which is the most important part of the tree; and if the tree be poisonous, which is the most injurious — the root, or the branches, or the fruit. But I am here to-night, in God's name, and by His help, to show that this tree of abolitionism is evil, and only evil, root and branch, flower and leaf, and fruit; that it springs from, and is nourished by, an utter rejection of the Scriptures; that it produces no real benefit to the enslaved, and is the fruitful source of division, and strife, and infidelity, in both church and State. I have four distinct propositions on the subject to maintain — four theses to nail up and defend:

I. Abolitionism has no foundation in the Scriptures.

II. Its principles have been promulgated chiefly by misrepresentation and abuse.

III. It leads, in multitudes of cases, and by a logical process, to utter infidelity.

IV. It is the chief cause of the strife that agitates and the danger that threatens our country.

I. — ABOLITIONISM HAS NO FOUNDATION IN SCRIPTURE.

Passing by the records of the patriarchal age, and waiving the question as to those servants in Abraham's family who, in the simple, but expressive language of Scriptures, "were bought with his money," let us come at once to the tribunal of that law which God promulgated amid the solemnities of Sinai. What said the law and the testimony, to that peculiar people over whom God ruled, and for whose institutions he has assumed the responsibility? The answer is in the 25th chapter of Leviticus, in these words:

"And if thy brother that dwelleth by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee, thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bond servant, but as a hired servant; and a sojourner he shall be with thee, and shall serve thee unto the year of jubilee, and then shall he depart from thee, both he and his children with him."

So far, you will observe, the law refers to the children of Israel who, by reason of poverty, were reduced to servitude. It was their right to be free at the year of jubilee, unless they chose to remain in perpetual bondage, for which case provision is made in other and distinct enactments. But not so with slaves of foreign birth. There was no year of jubilee provided for them. For what says the law? Read the 44-46 verses of the same chapter.

"Both thy bondmen and thy bondmaids which thou shalt have shall be of the heathen that are round about you. Of them shall ye buy bondmen and bondmaids. Moreover, of the children of the strangers that do sojourn among you—of them shall ye buy, and of their families that are with you which they beget in your land; and they shall be your possession. And ye shall take them as an inheritance for your children after you to inherit them as a possession; they shall be your bondmen forever."

There it is, plainly written in the divine law. No legislative enactment, no statute framed by legal skill, was ever more explicit and incapable of perversion. When the abolitionist tells me that slaveholding is sin, in the simplicity of my faith in the Holy Scriptures, I point him to this sacred record, and tell him in all candor, as my text does, that his teaching blasphemes the name of God and His doctrine. When he begins to dote about questions and strifes of words, appealing to the Declaration of Independence, and asserting that the idea of property in man is an enormity and a crime, I still hold him to the record, saying, "Ye shall take him as an inheritance for your children after you to inherit them for a possession." When he waxes warm—as he always does if his opponent quotes Scripture, (which is the great test to try the spirits whether they be of God—the very spear of Ithuriel to reveal their true character,) when he gets angry, and begins to pour out his evil surmisings and abuse upon slaveholders—I obey the precept which says, "from such withdraw thyself," comforting myself with this thought: that the wisdom of God is wiser than men, and the kindness of God, kinder than men. Philosophers may reason and reformers may rave till doomsday, they never can convince me that God, in the Levitical law, or in any other law, sanctioned sin; and, as I know from the plain passage I have quoted, and many more like it, that He did sanction slaveholding among his ancient people, I know, also, by the logic of that faith which believes the Bible to be His word, that slaveholding is not sin. There are men even among professing Christians, and not a few ministers of the gospel, who answe this argument from the Old Testament Scriptures by a simple denial of their authority. They do not tell us how God could ever or any

where countenance that which is morally wrong, but they content themselves with saying that the Levitical law is no rule of action for us, and they appeal from its decisions to what they consider the higher tribunal of the gospel. Let us, therefore, join issue with them before the bar of the New Testament Scriptures. It is a historic truth, acknowledged on all hands, that at the advent of Jesus Christ slavery existed all over the civilized world, and was intimately interwoven with its social and civil institutions. In Judea, in Asia Minor, in Greece, in all the countries where the Saviour or his apostles preached the gospel, slaveholding was just as common as it is to-day in South Carolina. It is not alleged by any one, or at least by any one having any pretensions to scholarship or candor, that the Roman laws regulating slavery were even as mild as the very worst statutes which have been passed upon the subject in modern times. It will not be denied by any honest and well informed man that modern civilization and the restraining influences of the gospel have shed ameliorating influences upon the relation between master and slave, which was utterly unknown at the advent of Christianity. And how did Jesus and his apostles treat this subject? Masters and slaves met them at every step in their missionary work, and were even present in every audience to which they preached. The Roman law which gave the full power of life and death into the master's hand, was familiar to them, and all the evils connected with the system surrounded them every day as obviously as the light of heaven; and yet it is a remarkable fact — which the abolitionist does not, because he cannot, deny — that the New Testament is utterly silent in regard to the alleged sinfulness of slaveholding. In all the instructions of the Saviour — in all the reported sermons of the inspired apostles — in all the epistles they were moved by the Holy Spirit to write for the instruction of coming generations—there is not one distinct and explicit denunciation of slaveholding, nor one precept requiring the master to emancipate his slaves. Every acknowledged sin is openly and repeatedly condemned, and in unmeasured terms. Drunkenness and adultery, theft and murder—all the moral wrong which ever have been known to afflict society are forbidden by name; and yet, according to the teaching of abolitionism, the greatest of all sins—"this sum of all villanies"—is never spoken of, except in respectful terms. How can this be accounted for?

Let Dr. Wayland, whose work on moral science is taught in many of our schools, answer this question, and let parents, whose children are studying that book, diligently consider his answer. I quote from Wayland's Moral Science, page 213:

"The Gospel was designed not for one race or for one time, but for all races and for all times. It looked not to the abolition of slavery for that age alone, but for its universal abolition. Hence the important object of its author was to gain for it a lodgment in every part of the known world, so that by its universal diffusion among all classes of society it might quietly and peacefully modify and subdue the evil passions of men. In this manner alone could its object—a universal moral revolution—have been accomplished. For if it had forbidden the evil, instead of subverting the principle; if it had proclaimed the unlawfulness of slavery and taught slaves to resist the oppression of their masters, it would instantly have arrayed the two parties in deadly hostility throughout the civilized world; its announcement would have been the signal of servile war, and the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten amidst the agitation of universal bloodshed."

We pause not now to comment upon the admitted fact that Jesus Christ and his apostles pursued a course entirely different from that adopted by the abolitionists, including the learned author himself, nor to enquire whether the teaching of abolitionism is not as likely to produce strife and bloodshed in these days as in the first ages of the church. What we now call attention to, and protest against, is the imputation here cast upon Christ and his apostles. Do you believe the Saviour sought to *insinuate* his religion into the earth by concealing its real design, and preserving a profound silence in regard to one of the very worst sins it came to destroy? Do you believe that when he healed the centurion's servant, (whom every honest commentator admits to have been a slave,) and pronounced that precious eulogy upon the master, "I have not seen so great faith in Israel"—do you believe that Jesus suffered that man to live on in sin because he deprecated the consequences of preaching abolitionism? When Paul stood upon Mars' hill, surrounded by ten thousand times as many slaveholders as there were idols in the city, do you believe he kept back any part of the requirements of the gospel, because he was afraid of a tumult among the people? We ask these abolition philosophers whether, as a matter of fact, idolatry and the vices connected with it were not even more intimately interwoven with the social and civil life of the Roman empire than slavery was? Did the apostles abstain from preaching against idolatry? Nay, who does not know that by denouncing this sin they brought down upon themselves the whole power of the Roman empire? Nero covered the bodies of the Christian martyrs

with pitch, and lighted up the city with their burning bodies, just because they would not withhold or compromise the truth in regard to the worship of idols. In the light of that fierce persecution, it is a profane trifling for Dr. Wayland, or any other man, to tell us that Jesus or Paul held back their honest opinions of slavery for fear of "a servile war, in which the very name of the Christian religion would have been forgotten." The name of the Christian religion is not so easily forgotten; nor are God's great purposes of redemption capable of being defeated by an honest declaration of His truth everywhere and at all times. And yet this philosophy, so dishonoring to Christ and his apostles, is moulding the character of our young men and women. It comes into our schools and mingles with the very life-blood of future generations the sentiment that Christ and his apostles held back the truth, and suffered sin to go unrebuked for fear of the wrath of man. And all this to maintain, at all hazards, and in the face of the Saviour's example to the contrary, the unscriptural dogma that slaveholding is sin. But it must be observed in this connection that the apostles went much further than to abstain from preaching against slaveholding. They admitted slaveholders to the communion of the church. In our text, masters are acknowledged as "brethren, faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit." If the New Testament is to be received as a faithful history, no man was ever rejected by the apostolic church upon the ground that he owned slaves. If he abused his power as a master, if he availed himself of the authority conferred by the Roman law to commit adultery, or murder, or cruelty, he was rejected for these crimes, just as he would be rejected now for similar crimes from any Christian church in our Southern States. If parents abused or neglected their children, they were censured, not for having children, but for not treating them properly. And so with the slaveholder. It was not the owning of slaves, but the manner in which he fulfilled the duties of his station that made him a subject for church discipline. The mere fact that he was a slaveholder no more subjected him to censure than the mere fact that he was a father or a husband. It is upon the recognized lawfulness of the relation, that all the precepts regulating the reciprocal duties of that relation are based.

These precepts are scattered all through the inspired epistles. There is not one command or exhortation to emancipate the slave. The apostle well knew, that for the present, emancipation would be no real blessing to him. But the master is exhorted to be kind and considerate, and the slave to be obedient, that so they might preserve the unity of that church in which there is no distinction between Greek or Jew,

male or female, bond or free. Oh, if ministers of the gospel in this land or age, had but followed Paul as he followed Christ, and, instead of hurling anathemas and exciting wrath against slaveholders, had sought only to bring both master and slave to the fountain of Emanuel's blood; if the agencies of the blessed gospel had only been suffered to work their way quietly, as the light and dew of the morning, into the structure of society, both North and South, how different would have been the position of our country this day before God! How different would have been the privileges enjoyed by the poor black man's soul, which in this bitter contest, has been too much neglected and despised. Then there would have been no need to have converted our churches into military barracks for collecting firearms to carry on war upon a distant frontier. No need for a sovereign State to execute the fearful penalty of the law upon the invader for doing no more than honestly to carry out the teaching of abolition preachers, who bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, while they touch them not with one of their fingers. No need for the widow and the orphan to weep in anguish of heart over those cold graves, for whose dishonor and desolation God will hold the real authors responsible. No occasion or pretext for slaveholding States to pass such stringent laws for the punishment of the secret incendiary and the prevention of servile war.

I shall not attempt to show what will be the condition of the African race in this country when the gospel shall have brought all classes under its complete dominion. What civil and social relations men will sustain in the times of millenial glory, I do not know. I cordially embrace the current opinion of our church that slavery is permitted and regulated by the divine law under both Jewish and Christian dispensations, not as the final destiny of the enslaved, but as an important and necessary process in their transition from heathenism to Christianity—a wheel in the great machinery of Providence, by which the final redemption is to be accomplished. However this may be, one thing I know, and every abolitionist might know if he would, that there are Christian families at the South in which a patriarchal fidelity and affection subsist between the bond and the free, and where slaves are better fed and clothed and instructed, and have a better opportunity for salvation, than the majority of laboring people in the city of New York. If the tongue of abolitionism had only kept silent these twenty years past, the number of such families would be tenfold as great. Fanaticism at the North is one chief stumbling-block in the way of the gospel at the South. This is one great grievance that

presses to-day upon the hearts of our Christian brethren at the South. This, in a measure, explains why such men as Dr. Thornwell, of South Carolina, and Dr. Palmer, of New Orleans—men whose genius and learning and piety would adorn any State or station—are willing to secede from the Union. They feel that the influence of the Christian ministry is hindered, and their power to do good to both master and slave crippled, by the constant agitations of abolitionism in our national councils, and the incessant turmoil excited by the unscriptural dogma, that slaveholding is sin.

II. — THE PRINCIPLES OF ABOLITIONISM HAVE BEEN PROPAGATED CHIEFLY BY MISREPRESENTATION AND ABUSE.

Having no foundation in Scripture, it does not carry on its warfare by Scripture weapons. Its prevailing spirit is fierce and proud, and its language is full of wrath and bitterness. Let me prove this, by testimony from its own lips. I quote Dr Channing, of Boston, whose name is a tower of strength to the abolition cause, and whose memory is their continual boast. In a work published in 1836, I find the following words:

"The abolitionists have done wrong, I believe; nor is their wrong to be winked at because done fanatically or with good intentions; for how much mischeif may be wrought with good designs! They have fallen into the common error of enthusiasts, that of exaggerating their object, of feeling as if no evil existed but that which they opposed, and as if no guilt could be compared with that of countenancing and upholding it. The tone of their newspapers, so far as I have seen them, has often been fierce, bitter and abusive. They have sent forth their orators, some of them transported with fiery zeal, to sound the alarm against slavery through the land, to gather together young and old, pupils from schools, females hardly arrived at the years of discretion, the ignorant, the excitable, the impetuous, and to organize these into associations for the battle against oppression. Very unhappily they preached their doctrine to the colored people, and collected them into societies. To this mixed and excitable multitude, minute heart-rending descriptions of slavery were given in piercing tones of passion; and slaveholders were held up as monsters of cruelty and crime. The abolitionist, indeed, proposed to convert slaveholders; and for this end he approached them with vituperation, and exhausted on them the vocabulary of abuse. And he has reaped as he sowed."

Such is the testimony of Dr. Channing, given in the year 1836. What would he have thought and said if he had lived until the year 1860, and seen this little stream, over whose infant violence he lamented, swelling into a torrent and flooding the land? Abolitionism is abusive in its persistent misrepresentation of the legal principles involved in the relation between master and slave. They reiterate in a thousand exciting forms the assertion, that the idea of property in man blots out his manhood and degrades him to the level of a brute or a stone. "Domestic slavery," says Dr. Wayland, in his work on moral science, "supposes at best, that the relation between master and slave is not that which exists between man and man, but is a modification, at least, of that which exists between man and the brutes." Do not these abolitionist philosophers know, that according to the laws of every civilized country on earth, a man has property in his children, and a woman has property in her husband? The statutes of the State of New York, and of every other Northern State, recognize and protect this property, and our courts of justice have repeatedly assessed its value. If a man is killed on a railroad, his wife may bring suit and recover damages for the pecuniary loss she has suffered. If one man entice away the daughter of another, and marry her while she is still under age, the father may bring a civil suit for damages for the loss of that child's services, and the pecuniary compensation is the only redress the law provides. Thus the common law of christendom, and the statutes of our own State, recognize property in man. In what does that property consist? Simply in such services as a man or child may properly be required to render. This is all that the Levitical law, or any other law, means when it says, "Your bondmen shall be your possession or property and an inheritance for your children." The property consists not in the right to treat the slave like a brute, but simply in a legal claim for such services as a man in that position may properly be required to render. And yet, abolitionists, in the face of the divine law, persist in denouncing the very relation between master and slave, "as a modification at least of that which exists between man and the brutes." This, however, is not the worst or most prevalent form which their abusive spirit assumes. Their mode of arguing the question of slaveholding, by a pretended appeal to facts, is a tissue of misrepresentation from beginning to end. Let me illustrate my meaning by a parallel case. Suppose I undertake to prove the wickedness of marriage as it exists in the city of New York. In this discussion, suppose the Bible is excluded, or at least that it is not recognized as having

exclusive jurisdiction in the decision of the question. My first appeal is to the statute law of the State.

I show there enactments which nullify the law of God and make divorce a marketable and cheap commodity. I collect the advertisements of your daily papers, in which lawyers offer to procure the legal separation of man and wife for a stipulated price, to say nothing in this sacred place of other advertisements which decency forbids me to quote. Then I turn to the records of our criminal courts, and find that every day some cruel husband beats his wife, or some unnatural parent murders his child, or some discontented wife or husband seeks the dissolution of the marriage bond. In the next place, I turn to the orphan asylums and hospitals, and show there the miserable wrecks of domestic tyranny in wifes deserted, and children maimed by drunken parents. In the last place, I go through our streets and into our tenement houses, and count the thousands of ragged children who, amid ignorance and filth, are training for the prison and gallows. Summing all these facts together, I put them forth as the fruits of marriage in the city of New York, and a proof that the relation itself is sinful. If I were a novelist, and had written a book to illustrate this same doctrine, I would call this array of facts a "Key." In this key I say nothing about the sweet charities and affections that flourish in ten thousand homes, not a word about the multitude of loving kindnesses that characterize the daily life of honest people, about the instruction and discipline that are training children at ten thousand firesides for usefulness here and glory hereafter; all this I ignore, and quote only the statute book, the newspapers, the records of criminal courts, and the miseries of the abodes of poverty.

Now, what have I done? I have not mis-stated or exaggerated a single fact. And yet, am I not a falsifier and slanderer of the deepest die? Is there a virtuous woman or an honest man in this city whose cheeks would not burn with indignation at my one-sided and injurious statements? Now, this is just what abolitionism has done in regard to slaveholding. It has undertaken to illustrate its cardinal doctrine in works of fiction, and then, to sustain the creation of its fancy, has attempted to underpin it with an accumulation of facts. These facts are collected in precisely the way I have described. The statute books of slaveholding States are searched, and every wrong enactment collated, newspaper reports of cruelty and crime on the part of wicked masters are treasured up and classified; all the outrages that have been perpetrated "by lewd fellows of the baser sort," of whom there are plenty both North and South, are eagerly seized and recorded, and this mass of

vileness and filth, collected from the kennels and sewers of society, is put forth as a faithful exhibition of slaveholding. Senators in the forum, and ministers in the pulpit, distil this raw material into the more refined slander "that Southern society is essentially barbarous, and that slaveholding had its origin in hell." Legislative bodies enact and re-enact statutes which declare that slaveholding is such an enormous crime that if a Southern man, under the broad shield of the Constitution, and with the decisions of the Supreme Court of the country in his hand, shall come within their jurisdiction and set up a claim to a fugitive slave, he shall be punished with a fine of $2,000 and fifteen years imprisonment. This method of argument has continued until multitudes of honest Christian people in this and other lands believe that slaveholding is the sin of sins — the sum of all villanies. Let me illustrate this, by an incident in my own experience. A few years since, I took from the center-table of a Christian family in Scotland, by whom I had been most kindly entertained, a book entitled "Life and Manners in America." On the blank leaf was an inscription, stating that the book had been bestowed upon one of the children of the family as a reward of diligence in an institution of learning. The frontispiece was a picture of a man of fierce countenance beating a naked woman. The contents of the book were professedly compiled from the testimony of Americans upon the subject of slavery. I dare not quote in this place the extracts which I made in my memorandum. It will be sufficient to say that the book asserts as undoubted facts, that the banks of the Mississippi are studded with iron gallows for the punishment of slaves; that in the city of Charleston, the bloody block on which masters cut off the hands of disobedient servants may be seen in the public squares; and that sins against chastity are common and unrebuked in professedly Christian families.

Now, in my heart I did not feel angry at the author of that book, nor at the school-teacher who bestowed it upon his scholar, for in Christian charity I gave them credit for honesty in the case; but standing there a stranger among the martyr memories of that glorious land to which my heart had so often made its pilgrimage, I did feel that you and I, and every man in America, was wronged by the revilers of their native land, who teach foreigners that hanging and cutting off hands, and beating women, are the characteristics of our life and manners.

But we need not go to foreign lands for proof that abolitionism has carried on its warfare by the language of abuse. The annual meeting of the American Anti-slavery Society brings the evidence to our doors.

We have been accustomed to laugh at these venal exhibitions of fanaticism, not thinking perhaps that what was fun for us was working death to our brethren whose property and reputation we are bound to protect. The fact is, we have suffered a fire to be built in our midst, whose sparks have been scattered far and wide; and now, when the smoke of the conflagration comes back to blind our eyes, and the heat of it begins to scorch our industrial and commercial interests, it will not do for us to say that the utterances of that society are the ravings of a fanatical and insignificant few; for the men who compose it are honored in our midst with titles and offices.

Its President is a Chief Justice of the State of New Jersey. The ministers who have thrown over its doings the sanction of our holy religion, are quoted and magnified all over the land as the representative men of the age; and the man who stood up in its deliberations, in the year 1852, and exhausted the vocabulary of abuse upon the compromise measures, and the great statesmen who framed them, is now a judge in our courts, and the guardian of our lives and our property.

It will doubtless be said that misrepresentations and abuse have not been confined, in the progress of this unhappy contest, to the abolitionists of the North; that demagogues and self-seeking men at the South have been violent and abusive, and that newspapers professedly in the interests of the South, with a spirit which can be characterized as little less than diabolical, have circulated every scandal in the most aggravated and irritating form. But suppose all this to be granted—what then? Can Christian men justify or palliate the wrath and evil speaking which are at their own doors, by pointing to the retaliation which it has provoked from their neighbors? If I were preaching today to a Southern audience it would be my duty, and I trust God would give me grace to perform it, to tell them of their sins in this matter; and especially would it be my privilege as a minister of the Gospel of peace—a privilege from which no false views of manhood should prevent me—to exhort and beseech them as brethren. I would assure them that there are multitudes here who still cherish the memory of the battle-fields and council-chambers where our fathers cemented this Union of States, and who still stand by the compact of the Constitution to the utmost extremity.

I would tell the thousands of Christian ministers, among whom are some of the brightest ornaments of the American pulpit, and the tens of thousands of Christian men and women, towards whom, while the love of Christ burns in me, my heart never can grow cold, that if they will only be patient and hope to the end, all wrongs may yet be righted.

Therefore, I would beseech them not to put a great gulf between us, and cut off the very opportunity for reconciliation upon an honorable basis by a revolution whose end no human eye can see. But, then, I am not preaching at the South. I stand here, at one of the main fountain-heads of the abuse we have complained of.

I stand here to rebuke this sin, and exhort the guilty parties to repent and forsake it. It is magnanimous and Christ-like for those from whom the first provocation came to make the first concessions.

The legislative enactments which are in open and acknowledged violation of the Constitution, and whose chief design is to put a stigma upon slaveholding, must and will be repealed. Truth and justice will ultimately prevail; and God's blessing, and the blessings of generations yet unborn, will rest upon that party, in this unhappy contest, who first stand forth to utter the language of conciliation and proffer the olive branch of peace. The great fear is that the retraction will come too late; but sooner or later it will come. Abolitionism ought to, and one day will, change the mode of its warfare, and adopt a new vocabulary. I believe in the liberty of the press and in freedom of speech; but I do not believe that any man has a right before God, or in the eye of civilized law, to speak and publish what he pleases without regard to the consequences. With the conscientious convictions of our fellow-citizens, neither we nor the law has any right to interfere; but the law ought to protect all men from the utterance of libellous words whose only effect is to create division and strife.

I trust and pray, and call upon you to unite with me in the supplication, that God would give abolitionists repentance and a better mind so that in time to come, they may at least propagate their principles in decent and respectful language.

III.—ABOLITIONISM LEADS IN MULTITUDES OF CASES, AND BY A LOGICAL PROCESS, TO UTTER INFIDELITY.

On this point I would not and will not be misunderstood. I do not say that abolitionism is infidelity. I speak only of the tendencies of the system as indicated in its avowed principles, and demonstrated in its practical fruits.

It does not try slavery by the Bible, but, as one of its leading advocates has recently declared, it tries the Bible by the principles of freedom. It insists that the word of God must be made to support certain human opinions, or forfeit all claims upon our faith.* That I may not be suspected of exaggeration on this point, let me quote from the recent

work of Mr. Barnes a passage which may well arrest the attention of all thinking men:

"There are great principles in our nature, as God has made us, which can never be set aside by any authority of a professed revelation. If a book claiming to be a revelation from God, by any fair interpretation, defended slavery, or placed it on the same basis as the relation of husband and wife, parent and child, guardian and ward, such a book would not and could not be received by the mass of mankind as a Divine revelation."

This assumption that men are capable of judging beforehand what is to be expected in a divine revelation, is the cockatrice's egg from which in all ages heresies have been hatched. This is the spider's web which men have spun out of their own brains, and clinging to which they have attempted to swing over the yawning abyss of infidelity. Alas, how many have fallen in and been dashed to pieces! When a man sets up the great principles of our nature (by which he always means his own preconceived opinions) as the supreme tribunal before which even the law of God must be tried—when a man says, "The, Bible must teach abolitionism, or I will not receive it,"—he has already cut loose from the sheet anchor of faith. True belief says, "Speak, Lord, thy servant waits to hear." Abolitionism says, "Speak, Lord, but speak in accordance with the principles of human nature, or they cannot be received by the great mass of mankind as a divine revelation." The fruit of such principles is just what we might expect. Wherever the seed of abolitionism has been sown broadcast, a plentiful crop of infidelity has sprung up. In the communities where anti-slavery excitement has been most prevalent, the power of the gospel has invariably declined; and when the tide of fanaticism begins to subside, the wrecks of church order and of Christian character have been scattered on the shore. I mean no disrespect to New England—to the good men who there stand by the ancient landmarks and contend earnestly for the truth—nor to the illustrious dead whose praise is in all the churches; but who does not know that the States in which abolitionism has achieved its most signal triumphs are at the same time the great strongholds of infidelity in the land? I have often thought that if some of those old Pilgrim fathers could come back, in the spirit and power of Elias, to attend a grand celebration at Plymouth rock, they might well preach on this text: "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham." The effect of abolitionism upon individuals is no less striking and mournful than its influence upon communities. It is a remarkable and instructive fact, and one at which Christian men would do well to pause and consider,

that in this country all the prominent leaders of abolitionism, outside of the ministry, have become avowed infidels; and that all our notorious abolition preachers have renounced the great doctrines of grace as they are taught in the standards of the reformed churches—have resorted to the most violent processes of interpretation to avoid the obvious meaning of plain Scriptural texts, and ascribed to the apostles of Christ principles from which piety and moral courage instinctively revolt. They make that to be sin which the Bible does not declare to be sin. They denounce, in language such as the sternest prophets of the law never employed, a relation which Jesus and his apostles recognized and regulated. They seek to institute terms and texts of Christian communion utterly at variance with the organic law of the church as founded by its Divine Head; and, attempting to justify this usurpation of divine prerogatives by an appeal from God's law to the dictates of fallen human nature, they would set up a spiritual tyranny more odious and insufferable, because more arbitrary and uncertain in its decisions, than Popery itself. And as the tree is so have its fruits been. It is not a theory, but a demonstrated fact, that abolitionism leads to infidelity. Such men as Garrison, and Giddings, and Gerrit Smith, have yielded to the current of their own principles, and thrown the Bible overboard. Thousands of humbler men who listen to abolition preachers will go and do likewise. And whether it be the restraints of official position, or the preventing grace of God, that enables such preachers to row up the stream and regard the authority of Scripture in other matters, their influence upon this one subject is all the more pernicious because they prophesy in the name of Christ. In this sincere and plain utterance of my deep convictions, I am only discharging my conscience toward the flock over which I am set. When the shepherd seeth the wolf coming, he is bound to give warning.

IV.—ABOLITIONISM IS THE CHIEF CAUSE OF THE STRIFE THAT AGITATES AND THE DANGER THAT THREATENS OUR COUNTRY.

Here, as upon the preceeding point, I will not be misunderstood. I am not here as the advocate or opponent of any political party; and it is no more than simple justice for me to say plainly, that I do not consider Republican and Abolitionist as necessarily synonymous terms. There are tens of thousands of Christian men who voted with the successful party in the late election, who do not sympathize with the principles or aims of abolitionism. Among these are some beloved members of my own flock, who will not hesitate a moment to put the seal of their approbation upon the doctrine of this discourse. And what is

still more to the point, there seems to be sufficient evidence that the man who has just been chosen to be the head of this nation, is among the more conservative and Bible-loving men of his party. We have no fears that if the new administration could be quietly inaugurated, it would or could abolitionize the government. There are honest people enough in the Northern States to prevent such a result. But, then, while this is admitted as a simple matter of truth and justice, it cannot be denied, on the other hand, that abolitionism did enter, with all its characteristic bitterness, into the recent contest; that the result never could have been accomplished without its assistance, and that it now appropriates the victory in words of ridicule and scorn that sting like a serpent. Let me give you, as a single specimen of the spirit in which abolitionism has carried on its political warfare, an extract from a journal which claims to have a larger circulation than any other religious paper in the land. I quote from the *New York Independent*, of September, 1856:

"The people will not levy war nor inaugurate a revolution, even to relieve Kansas, until they have first tried what they can do by voting. If this peaceful remedy should fail to be applied this year, then the people will count the cost wisely, and decide for themselves boldly and firmly which is the better way to rise in arms and throw off a government worse than that of old King George, or endure it another four years, and then vote again."

Such is the spirit—such the love to the Constitution and Union of these States—with which this religious element has entered into and seeks to control our party politics.

But we deceive ourselves if we suppose that our present dangers are of a birth so recent as 1856. As the questions now before the country rise in their magnitude above all party interests and ought at once to blot out all party lines, so their origin is found far back of all party organizations as they now exist.

An article published twenty years ago in the *Princeton Review*, contains this remarkable language:

"The opinion that slaveholding is itself a crime must operate to produce the disunion of the States and the division of all ecclesiastical societies in this country. Just so far as this opinion operates, it will lead those who entertain it to submit to any sacrifices to carry it out and give it effect. We shall become two nations in feeling, which must soon render us two nations in fact."

These words are wonderfully prophetic, and they who read the signs of the times must see that the period of their fulfillment draws near.

In regard to ecclesiastical societies, the division foretold is already in a great measure accomplished. Three of our great religious denominations have been rent in twain by the simple question, "Is slaveholding a sin?"

It yet remains to be seen whether the American Tract Society, and the American Board of Foreign Missions, will be revolutionized and dismembered by a contest which, we are told, is to be annually renewed. In regard to the Union of these States, there is too much reason to fear that "we are already two nations in feeling," and to anticipate the near approach of the calamity which shall blot out some of the stars in our ensign and make us two nations in fact.

And what has brought us to the verge of this precipice? What evil spirit has put enmity between the seed of those whom God by his blessing on the wisdom and sacrifices of our fathers, made one flesh? What has created and fostered this alienation between the North and South, until disunion—that used to be whispered in corners—stalks forth in open daylight, and is recognized as a necessity by multitudes of thinking men in all sections of the land? I believe before God, that this division of feeling, of which actual disunion will be but the expression and embodiment, was begotten of abolitionism, has been rocked in its cradle and fed with its poisoned milk, and instructed by its ministers, until girded with a strength which comes not altogether of this upper world, it is taking hold upon the pillars of the Constitution and shattering the noble fabric to its base.

There was a time when the Constitutional questions between the North and South—the conflict of material interests growing out of their differences in soil and production—were discussed in the spirit of statesmanship and Christian courtesy. Then such men as Daniel Webster on the one side, and Calhoun on the other, stood up face to face, and defended the rights of their respective constituency in words which will be quoted as long as the English tongue shall endure, as a model of eloquence and a pattern of manly debate. But abolitionism began to creep in. It came first as a purely *moral* question; but very soon its doctrines were embraced by a sufficient number to hold the balance of power between contending parties in many districts and States. Aspirants for the Presidency seized upon it as a weapon for gratifying their ambition or avenging their disappointments. Under the shadow of their patronage, sincere abolitionists became more bold and abusive in advocating their principles. The unlawful and wicked business of enticing slaves from their masters was pushed forward with increasing zeal. Men who in the better days of the Republic could not

have obtained the smallest office, were elected to Congress upon this single issue; and ministers of the gospel descended from the pulpit to mingle religious animosity with the boiling cauldron of political strife. Nor was this process confined to one side in the contest. Abuse always provokes recrimination. So long as human nature is passionate, hard words will be responded to by harder blows. And now behold the result! In the halls where Webster and Calhoun, Adams and McDuffie rendered the very name of American statesmanship illustrious, and revived the memory of classic eloquence, we have heard the outpouring of both Northern and Southern violence from men who must be nameless in this sacred place; and in the land where such slaveholders as Washington and Madison united with Hamilton and Hancock in cementing the Union which they fondly hoped would be perpetual, commerce and manufactures, and all our great industrial and governmental interests, are trembling on the verge of dissolution; and as abolitionism is the great mischief-maker between North and South, so it is the great stumbling-block in the way of a peaceful settlement of our difficulties. Its voice is still for war. The spirit of conciliation and compromise it utterly abhors, and, mingling a horrid mirth with its madness, puts into the hands of the advocates of secession the very fans with which to blow the embers of strife into a flame. One man threw a torch into the great temple of the Ephesians, and kindled a conflagration which a hundred thousand brave men could not extinguish. One man fiddled and sang, and made his courtiers laugh, amid the burning of Rome—and the abolition preacher "feels good" and overflows with merriment, when he sees our merchants and laboring men running after their chests and the bread of their families "as if all creation was after them," and snuffs on the Southern breeze the scent of servile and civil war.

Oh, shame—shame that it should come to this; and the name of our holy religion be so blasphemed! Let us hope in Christian charity, that such men do not comprehend the danger that stares them in the face. Indeed, who of us does fully comprehend it? In the eloquent words of Daniel Webster, "While the Union lasts we have high, exciting, gratifying prospects spread out before us, for us and for our children. Beyond that I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant that in my day, at least, that curtain may not rise." A kind and wonderful Providence has so tempered the body of these States together, so bound and interlaced them with commercial and social ties, to say nothing of legal obligations, that no member can be severed, and especially no contest can be waged among the members, without a quivering and anguish

in every nerve, and a stagnation in the vital currents of all. Let one star be blotted out from our ensign, and the moral gravitation which holds all in their orbits will be paralyzed, if not utterly destroyed. The living example of successful secession for one cause, will suggest the same course for another; and unless God gives our public men a wisdom and forbearance, of which the past few years have afforded too little evidence, the dissolution of this Union will be the signal for the disintegration of its elements. In such a chaos let us not flatter ourselves that we shall be in entire peace and safety. The contest on whose perilous edge we seem to stand cannot be merely a sectional one—all the North on the one side, and all the South on the other. It is a conflict that will run the ploughshare of division through every State and neighborhood in the land. Abolition orators may talk about what "we of the North" will do and will not do, as though all the people had bowed down to worship the image they had set up; but other men besides them will claim the right to speak—other interests will need to be conserved besides the cause upon which they arrogantly assume that victory perches and the smile of heaven rests. "Let not him who putteth on his armor boast as he that pulleth it off." When the thousands of working-men whose subsistence depends upon our trade with the South, many of whom have been deluded by abolition demagogues, shall clamor in our streets for bread, free labor may present some problems which political economy has not solved. And when the commerce of this cosmopolitan city is paralyzed, and all her benevolent and industrial institutions are withering in the heat of this unnatural contest, it may become a question—nay, is it not already whispered in your counting-houses?—whether this great metropolis can be separated from the people with whom her interest and her heart is bound up, and continue to be controlled by a legislative policy against which she is continually protesting? or whether, following the great lights of history, she will at all hazards set up for herself, and unbolting the gateway of her magnificent harbor, invite the free trade of the world to pour its riches into her bosom?

Such are a few of the problems which bring the question of a dissolution of the Union home to us. If we were sure of a peaceful solution, at whatever pecuniary or social sacrifice, we would not feel so deeply nor speak so earnestly. But who knows that it will be peaceful? Where is the surgeon who can sever even one member from this body politic without the shedding of blood? Where is the statesman or political economist who will undertake to control the parties, or direct the industrial interests of any one State, amid the confusion and alarm

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of dissolution? Let us not deceive ourselves. The chasm before us is a yawning abyss, into whose depths no eye but God's can penetrate. Other men may cry "who's afraid?" and whistle to keep their courage up; but I confess my fears. Through the curtain that is about to rise, I see shadows at which the horror of a great darkness settles down upon my spirit, and the hair of my flesh stands up. Let us appeal to the God of peace, in whose hands are the hearts of all men, to dispel the fearful vision, to infuse his loving spirit into our national council, to give our public men the meekness of wisdom, and to bind the hearts of all the people once more in bonds of brotherly kindness.

But, if we would have these supplications answered, let us prove our faith by our works; take the beam out of our own eye, and obey the two-fold precept of the text: "These things teach and exhort, and if any man teach otherwise, from such withdraw thyself."